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TAGS: PREL MARR PGOV AF JA

SUBJECT: MOD DG TAKAMIZAWA DISCUSSES AFGHANISTAN,
REALIGNMENT AND COLLECTIVE SELF DEFENSE

REF: TOKYO 1464

Classified By: DCM Joe Donovan; Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In a June 25 dinner Ministry of Defense (MOD) Director General for Defense Policy Nobushige Takamizawa cited technical and political challenges to the possibility of Japan deploying helicopters or PRTs to Afghanistan. He also underscored the Japanese Government's need to convince Japan's public and politicians of the importance of any mission. On realignment, he suggested that MOD faces the predicament of explaining to the public the discrepancy between the U.S. and Japanese governments with respect to the number of military dependents to be moved from Okinawa to Guam. Regarding collective self defense, Takamizawa predicted Prime Minister Fukuda and the Cabinet will set aside the Yanai-led blue ribbon panel's report. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In a June 25 farewell dinner hosted for the DCM, Ministry of Defense (MOD) Director General for Defense Policy Nobushige Takamizawa discussed a number of Alliance issues, including Japanese support of coalition operations in Afghanistan, realignment, and collective self defense. Takamizawa was accompanied by MOD Senior Coordinator for Realignment Marui, Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation Division Director Serizawa, Defense Policy Division Director Yamamoto, and Strategic Planning Division Director Nakajima. Embassy Political Minister-Counselor, Defense Attaché and other Embassy officers accompanied the DCM.

Afghanistan

¶3. (C) DG Takamizawa noted that MOD is considering deploying Japanese CH-47 helicopters, and/or dispatching Japanese Self Defense Force (JSDF) members or civilian officials to provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in support of coalition operations in Afghanistan. He singled out two main challenges with respect to expanding Japanese support for Afghan operations: technical limits of Japanese CH-47s and the Japanese government's unenviable task of persuading Diet members to pass necessary legislation. The JSDF's CH-47J helicopters do not have the same engine performance standards as U.S. CH-47s and will have difficulty operating in southern

Afghanistan without significant modifications, he asserted. Takamizawa estimated it could take two to three years to make these modifications. The dilemma, Takamizawa said, is that Japanese CH-47s should operate adequately in northern Afghanistan but the needs of the coalition forces are greatest in the south.

¶4. (C) Perhaps more difficult than overcoming technical challenges is obtaining consensus among politicians and the Japanese public, Takamizawa said. The Government of Japan needs to develop a specific, reasonable plan that it can present to members of the public to persuade them of the merits of deploying to Afghanistan. While the possibility of casualties is something the Japanese public can come to accept with the right approach, politicians will remain averse to any risk to Japanese lives. Takamizawa suggested that a deployment in the north and west of Afghanistan would minimize any casualties among Japanese Self Defense Force (JSDF) members or civilians and have the added benefit of being able to deploy JSDF CH-47s without modifications. He added that participation in PRTs is an attractive option for the Japanese government to pursue, as it is an activity that can be illustrated more easily as humanitarian assistance efforts than the dispatch of CH-47s.

¶5. (C) Takamizawa underscored that, regardless of where the helicopters might be deployed, three conditions must be met to convince the public and politicians of the need for a deployment to Afghanistan. First, the Japanese government must characterize the operation as a humanitarian relief mission. Second, the international community -- especially Afghanistan, the UK, Germany, and Canada -- must welcome and support publicly the Japanese plan. Finally, the United States should highlight the importance of Japan's mission regardless of the substance of the activities.

¶6. (C) When asked about possible roles for NGOs and other ministries and agencies in a deployment, Takamizawa noted that MOD has not yet engaged with other ministries or the Japanese public. There is no clear lead in any of the Japanese ministries on the matter of deployment, he said. He noted, however, that Japan is impressed with the role of civilian participation and leadership in Afghanistan and pledged to explore similar roles for Japan.

Realignment

¶7. (C) Takamizawa lamented that he had not realized a serious gap existed between U.S. and Japanese figures on the number of military dependents involved in the relocation of U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam. MOD faces a gargantuan task of explaining to the public the discrepancy, having had, in effect, "sold false figures" to the Japanese public. Japanese officials are currently deliberating internally on the best way to address the issue without opening the door for opposition leaders to call for a fundamental investigation into the realignment process. DCM pointed out that we had been careful to state throughout the realignment process that the number of dependents cannot be fixed early on and that they would remain notional until final decisions are made on which uniformed personnel will relocate.

Collective Self-Defense

¶8. (C) Regarding the June 24 report from the blue-ribbon panel on collective self defense headed by former Ambassador to the United States Shunji Yanai, Takamizawa said Prime Minister Fukuda and the cabinet will likely set aside any recommendations from the report for future deliberation. His impression is that the report, while uncontroversial in content, is a rough sketch that reads like a "wishlist" that fails to address specific roadmaps for realizing collective self defense. Takamizawa underscored that the Prime Minister and other senior officials are dismayed by the poor timing of the release of the report, as it can be viewed by the public as a gap in perception between the administration and the

panel, i.e., between Fukuda and former PM Abe. Barring a major incident, the report is not likely to generate much public interest, Takamizawa predicted.

SCHIEFFER